



Arizona Department of Public Safety

- For Immediate Release -

Monday, March 9, 2009

Arizona Department of Public Safety Officers seize over 5,500 pounds of marijuana and 27 vehicles during February

Meth and heroin also seized; street value of seized drugs estimated to be over \$4 million

Several traffic stops by Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) officers along with the efforts of DPS criminal investigators resulted in the seizure of 5,514 pounds of marijuana during the month of February. Current street values put this amount of marijuana at \$3,032,617. DPS Officers also seized nearly 120 pounds of hydroponic marijuana in February worth about \$540,000. One of the 27 vehicles seized by DPS during counternarcotics operations in February was a late model Toyota F.J. Cruiser.

Also seized by DPS in February was 11 pounds of methamphetamine with a street value of \$187,000 and over 8.5 kilograms (18.7 lbs) of heroin with a street value of \$300,020. The total value of the illicit drugs seized by DPS in February is over \$4,056,617.

One of the larger marijuana seizures by DPS during a single traffic stop occurred on February 15th when a DPS officer stopped a 2008 Ford Expedition for a moving violation eastbound on Interstate 40 at milepost 172 (about 20 miles west of Flagstaff). The officer was able to smell a strong odor of raw marijuana coming from the vehicle. The officer searched the SUV and found three large hockey-style duffel bags in the rear of the SUV. Inside the duffel bags were bundles of marijuana. The bundles had been pressed into tight bricks with a trash compactor and then heavily wrapped with green saran wrap. The marijuana weighed in at 192 pounds with a street value of \$105,000. The driver, Michael D. Shannon, 53, of Chula Vista, Calif., was arrested and booked into the Coconino County Jail on charges of possession of marijuana, possession of marijuana for sale, transportation of marijuana for sale, and conspiracy to distribute/sell marijuana. The suspect stated he was headed to Georgia with this particular load. The marijuana was seized and the SUV was returned to the rental agency.

"The drugs seized by DPS in February following traffic stops and other types of law enforcement activities are a testament to the professionalism and dedication of DPS officers who strive to make our communities safer places to live. The seizures also reveal what law enforcement is facing in the ongoing battle against violent drug cartels doing business in Arizona," said Roger Vanderpool, director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

* Photos available upon request

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